



February 17, 2005

Providence man admits trafficking in crack cocaine

Fernando Enrique Punnett, 61, of Providence, has pleaded guilty to federal drug-trafficking charges, admitting that he sold crack cocaine to an undercover agent last fall. Agents with the **High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force** arrested Punnett in November and seized about 66 grams of crack cocaine from his Westminster Street apartment.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty plea, which Punnett entered on February 14 before U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith in U.S. District Court, Providence. Punnett is free on bond pending sentencing, which is scheduled for May 10.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Adi Goldstein said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that, on three occasions in October, in his apartment at 1688 Westminster Street, Punnett sold crack cocaine to an undercover agent. The crack cocaine he sold weighed a total of about 23 grams. On November 1, HIDTA agents executed a search warrant at the apartment and seized an additional 66 grams of crack cocaine.

Punnett pleaded guilty to possessing with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of cocaine base and three counts of distributing cocaine base. Possessing with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of cocaine base has a minimum sentence of ten years imprisonment and a maximum of life plus a \$4,000,000 fine. One count of distributing crack cocaine has a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment and a \$2,000,000 fine and the other two carry a minimum sentence of five years imprisonment and a maximum of 40 years plus a \$2,000,000 fine.

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The **HIDTA Task Force**, which is led by the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** and the **Rhode Island State Police**, investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Goldstein is prosecuting the case.

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